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Having Your Cake and Eating It Too

HAVING YOUR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO

In How Successful Leaders Think, Martin examines an unique similarity many leaders have in their thinking processes. This similarity is the ability to process two different ideas concerning a situation and, instead of choosing one of those two ideas, the leader creates a superior solution, consisting of the best qualities of the two original ideas (2007). Although Martin discusses this idea from the business world's point of view, there is a strong argument that this leadership thinking process is quite successful when education leaders apply it. The best educational opportunities for our students come from integrating all the positive aspects from different approaches and merging them into the best choice.

An application of this thinking in education is the creation of a modified block schedule for schools. There have been arguments concerning what schedule is best for maximum student learning, the traditional 7 period scheduling or block scheduling. Many teachers that teach on a block schedule find it quite successful. The schedule allows students to concentrate on four classes of study for 90 school days. This schedule prepares students for future college class schedules. This type of school schedule can allow for more time for creative learning experiences in literature, history, and the sciences.

However, a leader needs to evaluate the best that a 7 period schedule has to offer for students. A 90 minute lecture can drain the attention from a student, which limits learning. The block schedule hurts students who want to take advanced placement courses, for the tests in those courses are only given in May of each year; therefore, students either have the whole course and three months without the class before the test or only 3/4 of the material before they test. Many math subjects can drain a student with 90-minutes to compile many concepts, without time to practice and assess. Students deserve the best of both worlds

Therefore, integrative thinking has led to the use of modified block scheduling. This schedule allows block time for certain subjects that switches half way through a school year, while other subjects are taught

daily on a more traditional 45 minute schedule. Students are treated to the best of both schedules and have the opportunity to succeed better than if they were allowed only block or traditional scheduling options.

Integrative thinking does not mean that the new concept comes without some obstacles. In the case of modified block, schools may find modified block works well for their in-house activities, but it causes problems with online courses or school district technical centers. However, every effective leader knows that with all situations there does exist a solution. Leaders must think as leaders, not just act as leaders. Integrating thinking allows leaders to develop complex thinking abilities that allow for them to effectively work around obstacles.

When trying to explain to children that it must be one way or the other, there is a famous saying that goes, you cannot have your cake and eat it too. Integrated thinking argues allows this impossibility to be achieved. Businesses succeed on such creative thinking processes and so do educational institutions. Tomorrow's world is going to be led by those who think about what has been, what is, and combines the best to create what will be.

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The Integration of Web Design

THE INTEGRATION OF WEB DESIGN

Martin's How Successful Leaders Think leads us to believe that effective leaders have the ability to hold two opposing ideas in their heads at once. The effective leader then creatively takes those two ideas and generates a new idea which contains positive elements from the two others. This new idea is superior to both. The effective leader isn't always aware that he or she has the capability to perform the task at hand or that he is performing the task at all. Martin describes this trait of a great leader as integrated thinking.

Martin suggests that a person doesn't have to be born with this ability of integrated thinking but can learn to perform this task with practice. It is human nature for most individuals to look for quick solutions and tasks that are simple to perform. Anxiety and panic-like emotions are a characteristic of human nature when a complex problem arises. Most people seek out the comfort of simplicity in problem solving, but this is not the characteristic of an effective leader according to Martin. He expresses that effective leaders can miss out on valuable opportunities if opposing ideas are ignored.

The career field of Web Design and Development is an example of integrated thinking. This field challenges web designers and developers in a way that very few learners and thinkers are confronted with. This field demands broad knowledge and must be managed in a way that allows for quick retrieval. These professionals must think technologically and artistically. As they work to produce usable websites, web developers must be logical and creative at the same time. This split is one example of integrated thinking as an effective learner or leader.

To create a new web page, designers must use a left-brain versus right-brain skill integration. The left-brain is the logical side, and the right-brain is the intuitive side. These opposing sides must somehow combine to create a web design reflecting the combination of the two, and connect in a way that allows for integration and innovation. Innovation involves a range of abilities, and communication becomes a necessary factor when bringing new ideas to light. When working on a web site, web designers and

developers must use the integration of language, science, art and technology. The site must motivate visitors to decide whether or not to follow a link. Effective links encourage activity over passivity; therefore, the business of creating web sites is a challenging one in which integrated thinking can establish the success of the career.

Future administrators can gain knowledge by studying careers where integrative thinking is encouraged and used frequently. We can look to the business world for many examples of how effective leaders respond to problem solving. Breaking down problems into little pieces and working on them separately doesn't seem to be the solution. We must view the entire problem and see how the small parts affect the whole. According to Martin, we must hold all of those pieces in our mind at once, stating, "The integrative thinker will welcome the challenge of shaping the world for the better." (p. 67)

As a future administrator, I plan on working to be an integrative thinker to become an effective leader. I will ponder ideas when a problem seems challenging instead of seeking the most simplistic solution. After reading Martin's article, I believe that effective leaders can be taught if not innately born with the abilities. Effective leaders will consider many ideas, many compound solutions, and believe that possibly more than one perfect answer will determine their success.

Integrative Thinking in Education

As I reflect on Roger Martin’s “How Successful Leaders Think” (Martin, 2007) I think about how this could apply to education. From a distance it seems like the process of thinking outside of the box. The writing seems to be written towards business and private industry but problems are problems. My first thought is that the bureaucracy of governments including education might hinder this free thinking model of problem solving.

The concept of integrative thinking may have its limitations in education. Often school leaders react quickly to find a fix to a problem. These leaders often use proven strategies from experts that have worked in other schools or districts. This is probably the truest form of conventional thinking. A twenty year old study called Cognitive Flexibility and Inflexibility in Principal’s Problem Solving (Stager & Leithwood, 1988) parallels Martin’s Integrative Thinking model. This study found that school leaders who were more flexible in their problem solving were more effective leaders.

As a future school leader I also reflect on how I might use the integrative thinking approach to problem solving when I become a principal. I expect the biggest obstacle will be those who oppose change (in any form). I think it will be important to find the experts in my building who will think outside of the box. These experts can be allies in an integrative thinking model.

While there may be obstacles to this way of problem solving, I do believe these skills can be honed as Martin said. His notion of “habit of thought” (Martin, 2007, p.67) to arrive at possible solutions not clearly evident is an idea that I and other future school leaders should embrace.

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Integrative Thinking and 21st Century Skills

Integrative Thinking and 21st Century Skills

The process of integrative thinking is examined by Roger Martin in *How Successful Leaders Think*. This thinking process is explained as the ability to use deductive reasoning to extract the best aspects from two opposing ideas, thus creating an alternative which possesses the strengths of both ideas (Martin, 2007). Exemplary leaders in the business world have found success in this process of thinking. Educational leaders can also achieve more successful decision making by using integrative thinking.

An effective school administrator must possess the ability to use integrative thinking. It is not necessary for the administrator to possess the ability to process opposing information and immediately produce a solution. A competent administrator will use the process of integrative thinking by allowing time to consider the possible results of each idea. Allowing time to process information and use sound judgment is the key to successful integrative thinking. This is a skill that can be nurtured, but only if a person is willing to be open to various options, ideas, and is also open to failure. Failure, an important aspect of integrative thinking, leads to success when administrators learn from the causes of the failure. An integrative thinker will consider the strengths of various ideas and remember the result of former failures. This entire thought process will result in a superior choice or solution.

Leaders in the business world can choose not to use integrative thinking because it limits their power in decision making. Education differs from the business world in this aspect because the underlying reason for being in a position of educational leadership should not be one of power. Leadership should be about doing what is best for the education of children and the overall success of the school. Unfortunately, some school administrators have a close-minded approach of, “it is my way or no way” which does not provide the best learning environment for our students. Children learn by example. If the example set forth in a school is the leadership style of integrative thinking and open-mindedness to ideas, students will be expected to exhibit some of these same qualities.

The Partnership for Twenty-first Century Skills highlight the skills and thought processes children need in order for them to be competitive in today's ever-changing society. The expectation of teachers who incorporate these teaching strategies into their classrooms is to train students to use integrative thinking. "Learning and innovation skills increasingly are being recognized as the skills that separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those who are not. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future." This statement, from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, highlights the importance of instilling thinking skills into our youth. Other components related to learning and innovation skills of the students include: (1) Being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives, (2) Making complex choices and decisions, and (3) Identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions (www.21stcenturyskills.org). These three objectives are descriptors of the process of integrative thinking.

The entire 21st Century Skills initiative is the product of educational leaders who have used integrative thinking. Standards and assessments are mandated which produce an educational challenge. These requirements are somewhat restrictive to educators; however, the integrative thinkers in this profession have found ways to overcome these obstacles. These individuals have created 21st Century Skills to enhance the education of our youth. Research has shown that Americans do not rank as high as students from other countries in skills needed to succeed in the 21st century. This is considered another obstacle to overcome. The resolution has been the extensive development of standard based objectives specifically designed to address the needs of 21st century learners. Using the guidelines set forth by the Partnership for 21st Skills to accomplish mandated standards is an excellent option to accomplish two important educational tasks. By integrating the best aspects of two ideas into one, educators are given options above and beyond the scope of simple standards.

At this time, only six states have officially adopted 21st Century Skills as their state-wide initiative. This number will change as many more educational leaders use integrative thinking to search for new strategies in

to which overcome educational challenges. An effective leader continually evaluates and re-evaluates choices. Because there will always be obstacles and challenges to overcome in the field of education, administrators must strive to become effective integrative thinkers to enhance the success of their school. The integrative thinking process will allow educational leaders to make more complex decisions and judgments.

The process of learning from mistakes, learning from others, taking advice when necessary, and considering all available options, will help lead to better choices and, in turn, make an effective leader. Instilling the importance of thinking skills into our children is critical because they are the integrative thinkers of the future.

Integrated Thinking and Differentiated Learning

INTEGRATIVE THINKING AND DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING

Roger Martin's article, How Successful Leaders Think (Martin, 2007), refers to a single outcome that follows a path of detailed steps with regard to two very different ideas. The article reflects leadership that has an ability to arrive at a plan uniting oppositional ideas into one path. One might assume that these successful leaders represent a powerful capacity to think globally. They may possess, or have learned, the ability to see a larger vision based on facts that may seem opposable in process. This process applies to education through brain research.

Teachers who teach using only a single strategy, based on a single path to learner outcomes, are not integrating the many dimensions needed to teach all students. The teacher who can understand the varied and often oppositional learning styles of children can provide a greater array of educational service to his/her students. Integrated thinking and differentiated learning practices may represent a similar path.

An example of integrating of ideas, or learning styles, may be with respect to how differently boys and girls learn (Gurian, 2001). In a kindergarten class, boys may work with fine motor skills whereas girls may need practice with gross motor skills. Two different styles must integrate in the classroom to become one outcome. A teacher, who must envision a product while integrating multiple learning styles, must guide learners to the objective. By following different plans for different learners, using linear and multi-linear strategies, teachers integrate methods into a single lesson. A good teacher must be able to envision a single outcome, yet negotiate a variety of complex paths to achieve student success.

Educational leadership would do well to investigate the dynamics of integrated thinking. As school systems begin to explore new curriculum architecture to compete in a global economy, they must consider a variety of design paths involving opposable and multiple ideas. These may include an interdisciplinary curriculum, fusing social sciences, math, science, and language arts with fine arts. Educational leaders must consider the triadic role of teacher, resources, and student in preparing teaching strategies

(Rogge, 2008). This kind of educational planning presents a complex challenge similar to the business plans outlined in Martin's article.

It is fair to say that integrated thinking, as presented in the article, is not a unique idea. However, the four steps of integrated thinking, that is seeking the less obvious, seeking multidirectional and nonlinear relationships, visioning problems as a whole, and a creative resolution, are valuable to educational leaders in differentiating student learning and educational planning.

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Integrative Thinkers

REFLECTION ON “HOW SUCESSFUL LEADERS THINK”

Persons Who Shaped My Leadership Skills

After reading the article, How Successful Leaders Think (Martin, 2007), I immediately began reflecting on integrative thinkers that I know. After being employed in teaching and coaching for the past fifteen years, most of my thoughts went to former principals and head coaches that I had worked for. I also thought of my father, who has served in a variety of leadership roles in his lifetime. I believe that a combination of these people shape my thinking today. I would like to believe that I am an integrative thinker but really do not know whether I am or not. The article points out that most integrative thinkers are not even aware of their capability and do not consciously exercise it.

My Opinion on How Successful Leaders Think

The most successful principals and coaches that I have worked with go by the KISS method (Keep it Simple Stupid). The most successful have been able to take complex ideas and pull the best aspects from each idea to form a conclusion. After they have come to the conclusion, they have been able to put it into the simplest terms so that everyone working underneath them can understand and execute the ideas. The best ideas are useless without the proper execution, but that is also part of integrative thinking.

Conclusion

As a future leader, I will need to harness my ability to be an integrative thinker. I feel that this ability is essential for good leadership. This is a tall task but one that I will have to undertake. There will be plenty of mistakes that I will make along the way. The article points out several examples of mistakes made by these integrative thinkers. How I react to these mistakes will be my measure as a leader.

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Thinking Administratively

Integrative Thinking as a School Administrator

Integrative thinking, as mentioned by Martin (2007), is a way of taking two different ideas and developing a solution that satisfies both ideas. This thinking model can be extremely beneficial to a school administrator. There are many situations that cross an administrator's desk, that have differing ideas and opinions involved in them. It is up to the administrator to solve the issue in a way that is best for the school but that also satisfies the differing ideas and opinions.

Let us look at standardized tests (SOLs) for instance. In the recent years, SOLs have become somewhat of a nightmare for administrators. School systems depend on these scores to ensure funding and student progress. Bad scores can mean less funding and many problems. It is up to the school administrators to ensure student progress and classroom effectiveness. This can be difficult at times because you may have to figure out ways to adjust things such as scheduling classes, teacher assignments, and settings in your schools to benefit the testing results. I believe a lot of integrative thinking goes on in these situations.

Discipline issues are another topic that involves integrative thinking. Discipline issues arrive daily if not hourly in a school building involving much administrative effort. Therefore, an administrator must really be careful in how he/she handles each situation. The administrator must determine what happened, who done it, and what type of punishment fits the incident. Investigating the problem involves precise integrative thinking to determine the facts. When it is time to deliver the punishment, an administrator has to think about the positive and negative effects of the punishment on the child in and out of school. This involves integrative thinking.

Teacher conflicts arise quite often in a school building. The administrator has to take time away from his day to handle the issues that are normally minor problems. In these instances, the administrator has to listen to both sides and then come up with a resolution that both parties can live with.

Satisfying two upset teachers is a difficult task if they are truly at odds with each other. Dealing with these type situations calls for an administrator to use integrative thinking.

The above topics are just a few of the many examples of how a school administrator uses integrative thinking. Integrative thinking can be very beneficial to school administrators. The Martin thinking model can ease the many jobs an administrator has to fill.

Martin, R. L. (2007). *The opposable mind: how successful leaders win through integrative thinking*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 85.6, 60-67.

Thinking As a Successful Leader

Thinking As a Successful Leader

While reading Roger Martin's, How Successful Leaders Think, a school administrator can reflect on how integrated thinking skills apply to educational leadership. Administrators are often faced with making very hasty, crucial decisions. The results of these decisions affect the lives of children; therefore, any administrative decision must consider all indirect and direct effects on the children. Alternative courses of action should create the right answers by eliminating the wrong answers. Integrated thinkers use their ability to objectively observe, "from the balcony," when making decisions (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). Putting oneself outside of a situation as an unbiased observer creates a new world from which the correct answers may emerge. Integrated thinkers eliminate the reasons for wrong answers and develop right answers.

As an administrator, I believe that using integrated thinking will create favorable outcomes for many educational issues. I want to reflect on three issues administrators face: curriculum, parent conflicts, and scheduling.

First of all administrators, face the issue of reaching No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goals and objectives. High academic achievement is a challenge for administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. An administrator makes decisions about which resources are aligned with curriculum and most effective for achieving NCLB. When a teacher requests to implement certain teaching pedagogies or resources in his or her classroom, administrators should be familiar with the content and the teacher's ability to implement such materials. The various programs suggested and how they meet the goals of NCLB must be thoroughly considered. How, then, does an administrator make the right decision about curriculum? By integrating their thinking, administrators focus on their thought processes and not on the actions themselves.

Parental conflicts are another hot topic for administrators. Parents want their children to succeed in school and frequently raise concerns regarding their child's education. Administrators must choose how to deal with these concerns individually and collectively. Using integrative thinking

eliminated hindsight, or thoughts of, “I should have thought about that,” after the fact. The article, How Successful Leaders Think, states that it takes time to develop into an integrated thinker and experience to foster that ability as one grows professionally. Administrators will inevitably make many decisions that will not result in the desired effect, but with the knowledge of integrated thinking they will grow to become better thinkers and learn from their mistakes.

Finally, scheduling dilemmas are constant nightmares for administrators. Administrators cannot satisfy all of those affected by a scheduling decision, but they can use their integrated thinking to create a happy medium for all. Creating a master schedule involves choosing from among many alternatives, using a great deal of thinking skills and observing from the balcony to see whom each alternative impacts and how. Over time using integrated thinking produces positive results. Administrators cannot take criticism personally but must learn and grow from their mistakes.

Successful leaders use strategies to make decisions that produce desired results. It takes time to develop the skills of integrating thinking, and the ability to use integrated thinking grows with experience. Our thoughts are reality under construction. When making decisions, construct the wrong answers and realize why they are wrong. Take criticism constructively because it will always affect decisions. Administrators must rise to each occasion and decide what is best for the students affected. Developing and using integrated thinking skills allow administrators to make the right decisions.

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Successful School Administrators

Integrative Thinking School Administrators

School administrators play a key role in the success of a school. In today's educational setting it is more important than ever that school administrators find ways to improve their school's teaching and learning, because the ultimate goal of any school is one of success. School administrators serve in many different roles in the school, but the most important role is that of school leader. This leadership role may often defeat a conventional thinker, but not an integrative leader. The integrative leader thinks successfully with every decision that is made. According to Roger Martin's (2007) article How Successful Leaders Think, there are four stages to successful decision making. This paper will address the four stages to successful decision making and how they pertain to successful school administrators.

The first step of successful decision making is to determine salience. An integrative thinking administrator does not limit a solution to only a limited amount of information and not consider outside influences that may seem unrelated. This is often seen in schools with the teaching of Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOLs). Teachers are often instructed by conventional thinking school administrators to only teach the materials that may be on the standards of learning. Unfortunately, this often excludes the teaching of important skills that may aid with the learning of materials that are included on the SOLs. This is often discovered only after a school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). An integrative administrator thinks outside of the box and finds inventive ways to aid teachers with the teaching of standards. This shows the teachers and students that the administrator is not only willing to make crucial decisions, but also follow through with the implementation of those decisions.

Analyzing causality is the second step of the decision making process of integrative thinkers. Successful school administrators must be able to look at test scores and analyze what factors may have positively and negatively affected scores. The school administrator may conclude the cause to be one that is simplistic in nature or one that is of greater magnitude, but the importance is that the school administrator is able to consider more than a

direct cause. Often outside influences directly affect students success rate on the SOLs.

The third step is envisioning the decision architecture. This step requires the school administrator to make a decision. The integrative thinking administrator looks at the problem as a whole before making a decision. Successful administrators must consider how their decision to increase testing scores impacts AYP. Therefore, school administrators must consider the whole picture when making changes within the school.

The final step of the decision making process of integrative thinkers is achieving resolution. This step leaves the integrative school administrator with an outcome. This outcome may be positive or negative. A negative outcome leads the integrative thinker to begin the decision making process over and a positive outcome leaves the integrative thinker with a resolution. The resolution for successful school administrators is one that not only meets AYP, but surpasses what has been deemed adequate.

School administrators play a vital role in the success of a school. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that these leaders and future school leaders understand how to be integrative thinkers. It has been proven that integrative thinkers are more effective leaders and effective leaders create successful work environments.

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Integrative Thinking Using the Head and the Heart

Effective leadership involves making informed decisions for adaptive challenges. Leading is risky because it involves guiding people through difficult change. Effective leaders persevere by opening themselves up to possibilities that are not obvious. Making decisions that promote change involves integrating logical and emotional processes when developing options for consideration. Tension created through change can materialize in the form of negative emotional effects. Effective leaders approach problem solving by creatively synthesizing alternatives through integrative thinking by assessing relative, multidimensional relationships among options. Integrative thinkers have the “capacity to hold two opposing thoughts” (Martin, 2007, p. 62) in their heads at once and “creatively resolve the tension between those two ideas by generating a new one that contains elements of the others but is superior to both” (Martin, p. 62).

Humans have the ability to reason by making decisions based on judgment or fact. The ability to think objectively and critically involves identifying and evaluating evidence in making decisions when considering alternative courses of action. On the other hand, humans make decisions based on emotion by listening to their hearts and considering the feelings of others. Emotions often affect our ability to consider ideas objectively, but considering how decisions affect others emotionally is an integral component of effective leadership. People tend to resist change because change affects the comfort zone. Everyone cannot be satisfied when change takes place, so it is essential for leaders to adjust unrealistic expectations on an emotional level rather than trying to satisfy them (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). By thinking on a multidimensional level, integrative thinkers weigh the options from both the reasoning and the emotional angle when choosing from among alternative courses of action.

The mind houses logic in the left hemisphere and emotion in the right hemisphere, with each half viewing reality in a unique way. Reality is viewed by the left brain sequentially and logically, in a narrowly scoped manner. This half is the thinking portion of our brain. In contrast, the right brain sees reality emotionally, in an exploratory, widely scoped manner. The right half is the experience side of the brain. Often, we shut down our right

brain functions, or emotional side, in order to focus on the relevant facts that pertain to a particular situation or thinking problem. However, when considering change, the emotional content plays an important role in the success of a decision. Change affects the lives of those involved which, in turn, affects the success or failure of a proposed course of action. If change is viewed positively by those affected, there can be a much smoother transition than if the change is perceived negatively. Integrative thinkers must weigh the emotional outcomes against the logical outcomes for each relative factor and integrate those components that create optimal harmony for both the head and the heart.

Many leaders make decisions that cause change based on either fact or emotion, i.e. thinking versus feeling. Integrating both reason and emotion into decision making enables leaders to synthesize opposing outcomes into a superior decision. The resulting decision creates the most favorable outcomes for all stakeholders. By using both the head and the heart, integrative thinkers uncover “less obvious but potentially relevant factors” (Martin, 2007, p. 65) when promoting change.

The very nature of the decision itself often dictates how leaders come to a conclusion. In order to develop creative, effective solutions, leaders must steer away from “simplicity and certainty” (Martin, 2007, p. 64) that stem from left brain activity and train to simultaneously evaluate individual elements using both hemispheres. Choosing the components that, when integrated satisfies both the head and the heart, create a superior decision.

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Administrative Application of Integrative Thinking

Integrative Thinking: An Advantage for Education Administrators

What makes some people successful, admirable, and wealthy? Did they make the dean's list throughout college? Do they possess an inherent skill to understand everything and always find the best solutions to problems without difficulty? After reading the article by Roger Martin, How Successful Leaders Think, one may realize that some accomplished leaders most likely do have an advantage while working their way up the ladder of success. A possible advantage is the use of integrative thinking.

Over 60 years ago, F. Scott Fitzgerald recognized that highly intelligent individuals had an ability to manage two or more completely different ideas in their heads at one time, sift through the opposing attributes of each, and then weave together the best of all features to produce one resolution superior to any of the individual contributing ideas (Martin, 2007). At that particular time, however, the skill didn't have a name. Today it is called integrative thinking. An unusual fact is that most successful people aren't aware of their ability to be integrative thinkers. It's a skill that comes naturally for them. Luckily for those not endowed with such skill, integrative thinking can be learned.

Integrative thinking is a process of four steps. As it begins, the integrative thinker takes into consideration any and all possible factors involved in the problem or conflict. Possibilities aren't limited to only two or three variables. Even if some of them are direct opposites and have the potential to cause stress and dissension, the integrative thinker is able to manage extreme situations simultaneously. Next, he begins to sort through them and find multidirectional and nonlinear relationships among the factors. The integrative thinker will look at the entire scenario and not limit options to only one choice. The third step involves making a decision or proposing a viable solution for the problem. The integrative thinker alone considers the entire problem with all its factors and how possible solutions will affect each other. This information remains in the problem solver's mind only and is not dealt out to others for their interjections. The final step of the process is achieving the resolution. At this point, the problem area or tension is resolved and creative outcomes emerge. Instead of one point-blank solution

being offered, several creative solutions to address the original conflict are available, and the most favored can be applied.

Integrative thinking can be a valuable skill for school administrators. Not all decisions made during the course of a school term can be settled by simple yes-no answers. Administrators must be able to take into consideration many factors, integrate them into several different scenarios, and then apply the best solution to the problem at hand. A master schedule for an entire school is an excellent example. With current NCLB requirements, administrators must structure their curriculum and faculty in the best way possible to meet the needs of the students. First, strengths and weaknesses for the population of an entire grade level must be evaluated for the various achievement levels. The number and types of classes are decided upon based on that data. Second, a master schedule encompassing all core subjects, electives, special education and remedial classes must be devised. This task alone requires extreme attention and flexibility of thought by the administrator. In other words, integrative thinking can enable him to accomplish this task much easier and without great stress. When the master schedule is complete, staff members can be placed in specific jobs depending upon qualifications. Potential vacancies and possible staff changes can be ascertained. When the entire process is completed, a full, working master schedule should result. An advantage integrative thinking proposes during this scheduling process is that changes can be made to the final project if necessary. Integrative thinkers do not work towards only one specific solution.

Another situation in which an education administrator can optimize integrative thinking involves all stakeholders and NCLB testing requirements. With increasing pressure on individual schools to gain accreditation by achieving specific scores based on a variety of criteria, administrators are under a great deal of pressure to meet expectations. To do so, they must stay abreast of and coordinate their own administrative responsibilities in relation to the educational responsibilities of the faculty, students, parents, district authorities, and the community (Starratt, 2004). The entire situation is complex because a plan must be implemented that addresses the concerns and incorporates test scores and school accreditation. By applying integrative though processes, an administrator

can assimilate numerous factors into an applicable plan for moving the entire school population in a direction that will produce positive results.

Integrative thinking may not be the buzz word in today's educational area, but it is definitely a process that can prove efficient if used by school administrators. Class scheduling and NCLB accreditation goals are only two areas in which this process can be applied. Administrators who are open-minded and able to see the 'big picture' in their own educational situations can apply integrative thinking skills daily to aid them in planning and decision making activities.

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Integrative Thinking and Learning

Integrative thinking is a cognitive process which produces action. This action involves taking two ideas, pulling elements from both, and making a superior concept utilizing those elements. This is especially relevant in today's classroom where instruction must be differentiated daily. Teachers must learn the concept of several theories and devise programs utilizing particular elements of each. Numerous hours are spent creating lesson plans, constructing room designs, and modifying instruction so students will be able to learn. Various methodologies and theories play a prominent role in teachers' designs.

According to Roger Martin (2007) the four steps of decision making are the following: determining salience, analyzing causality, envisioning the decision architecture, and achieving reasoning. Integrative thinking determines what factors are involved and how those factors are linked to outcomes. If a person does not conclude factors and the anticipated results, then an informative and integrative decision has not been made. The end result would be a convenient, simple decision based upon the ease of achieving the results.

A true leader in any setting must think with the opposable mind. Effective leaders are the ones who do not look for a simple or convenient solution. Effective teachers are innovative and enthusiastic about learning. They may have many or few years of experience while teaching in any discipline. All four steps of the integrative thinking process work together to best determine the most beneficial initiative, along with its cause and effect. We as educators must teach our students how to use integrative thinking utilizing the four steps of decision making and incorporating into our lesson plans.

Martin, R. (2007). How Successful Leaders Think. Harvard Business Review, 60-67.

Integrative Thinking From a Students Perspective

INTEGRATIVE THINKING

Determining Salience basically means figuring out what is or is not important in a specific matter. Integrative thinkers believe that all factors are important and should be considered when making a decision. Just like corporate leaders, school administrators see an abundance of unique problems on a daily basis. For example, special education, regular education, and gifted education all have different issues that must be addressed accordingly. Additionally there is the business aspect of education (budget, technology, and school improvement, etc.) that must be properly dealt with in order to run an efficient school. If an administrator begins to narrow down the options without addressing all of them, then they will miss out on some better results. In short, the “either/or” concept must be abandoned in order to be a good administrator.

Analyzing Causality

While it is true that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line if you do not connect all of the dots then you do not get to see the complete puzzle. Conventional thinkers typically go from point A to point B with as little upset to business as usual. Where as, the integrative thinker likes to conceptualize all of the options between point A to point Z. It’s not the shortest distance between two point that makes for the best decision. It is the smartest, most beneficial, and overall best decision, where all factors have been considered simultaneously, that is the most important to an integrative thinker.

Envisioning the Decision Architecture

Conventional thinkers often fix things one problem at a time. They break down the problem into sections and fix it one section at a time. This is not a very productive way to solve problems, especially in a school system. School administrators face many different problems everyday. Like integrative thinkers, they must embrace every aspect of the problem. If not, the problem will arise in the future. For example, if a brick mason leaves a brick out a wall on a new school he is helping to build, the hole in the wall

will eventually cause problems and will weaken the school. The same applies to administrators, if you do not address the problem when it arises, it will weaken the school in some form or another in the future.

Achieving Resolution

It is human nature to solve a problem the quickest and simplest way. A conventional thinker would believe that the sooner the problem is solved, the better the situation. This however, may not be the most efficient choice. Integrative thinkers believe that solving a problem the simplest and quickest way important aspects can be left out. Although this can produce positive results, it will not produce the highest potential that solving the problem can bring. We want positive results as administrators but we should strive for the highest potential that solving a problem can bring.

ALL OF US ARE SMARTER THAN ONE OF US

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Martin (2007) has coined the phrase, Integrated Thinking, in his article titled, How Successful Leaders Think. Integrated thinking describes the process all good leaders undertake when making crucial decisions. In the business world, the person with final authority makes the tough decisions. It is the same practice in public schools except there is no CEO by title. The leader of the public school is the school administrator. School administrators demonstrate integrated thinking daily through their interactions with faculty and staff.

In the school setting, an administrator's decisions may affect the overall performance of the students and consequently the accreditation of the school. In order to make crucial decisions, administrators depend on the faculty and stakeholders to share in the decision making process by offering suggestions. These suggestions along with the administrator's personal experience and professional knowledge provide a foundation of ideas for developing a plan or making a decision.

Martin's Integrated Thinking model for successful leaders is a process involving information gathering and patience. Recently at a local middle school, an administrator was considering all suggestions from the math teachers for an appropriate method to review for the Standards of Learning (SOLs) tests. The teachers volunteered opinions and shared class room stories relating to attention spans, motivation, and weaknesses. A few days later, the administrator came back with a plan for the SOL Review. The plan was a novel combination of ideas and expertise from everyone. The plan, which implemented on a trial basis, encouraged revisions. Martin says, that "Integrated Thinking generates options and new solutions" (2007, p. 67).

Often suggestions divide a group into two factions, pros and cons. A skilled administrator will listen to all ideas from the group without discounting any options. Next, the administrator will take time to consider all the angles of each choice. Finally, the administrator will brainstorm to create a new scenario from all the ideas. An integrated Thinker will not accept making decisions from just one of two choices. As in the example above, the

successful leader will create a completely new scenario from which to make a decision.

Martin's Integrated Thinking process is a characteristic of successful leaders whether they are in the business world or in the educational system. In the business world, Integrated Thinkers may be the catalyst for making millions of dollars by using an innovative approach to solve an old problem. In the education system, Integrated Thinkers model for students the integrated thinking process that inspires creative and innovative approaches to solve problems!

References

Martin, Roger (2007). How successful leaders think. Harvard Business Review, 85.6, 60-67.

Integrating Thinking for Future Leaders in Education

As our society evolves and changes, we must too decide at some point that education must change also. Advances in technology have created a new playing field. According to Freedman (2007) in *The World is Flat*, “the playing field is being leveled” (p. 7). The ability to communicate instantly has created new competition for our country. No longer are we competing for jobs with people from the United States, we are competing for jobs with people all over the world. Students no longer prepare for jobs on assembly lines; they must prepare for jobs that don’t even exist yet!

The United States must focus on upgrading education so we will be able to compete in this new technology age. Success can no longer be expected while teaching our children using the same practices used in the past. Changes are desperately needed. This is the perfect time for the leaders in education to try integrative thinking in designing effective schools and curriculums. The integrative thought processes described by Martin are not subject to just business practices, they can be applied to every area of life, including education. Successful integrative thinkers use their creativity and problem solving skills to find the best possible solution to a problem. We must give students an education that teaches them to problem solve by using their higher level thinking skills in order for them to compete in the global market. If we do not, the price paid by the next generations will be detrimental.

Educational leaders are needed in this country who can take our system of educating children from the past to the present. In the past, we have been very conventional in our methods. Our schools were modeled after schools in other countries and there has been very little change since the beginning of public schools. Martin (2007) states that conventional thinkers simply accept things as they are and they do not want to challenge our current way of doing things. In other words, they become complacent. When it comes to the education of our children, complacency is dangerous to their future. The United States has always been on the cutting edge of technology and business. Why can’t we do the same with education? We know what works. The research has been done. The issue is taking the time to reorganize our entire educational system and provide the funding necessary to provide our

children with the best education in the world. This would not be an easy process, but as Martin stated, integrative thinkers “welcome complexity, because that’s where the best answers come from” (p. 64).

Martin, R. (2007). How Successful Leaders Think. Harvard Business Review, 60-67.

Friedman, T. L. (2007). The World is Flat. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux